

# News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

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## **CALIFORNIA DELAYS SMALLPOX VACCINATIONS**

SACRAMENTO – State Health Director Diana M. Bontá, R.N., Dr.P.H., today directed local health departments throughout the state to defer all upcoming smallpox vaccination clinics until no sooner than April 7, 2003. The deferral will provide additional time for the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to update their current recommendations regarding health conditions that would potentially increase the risk of an adverse reaction among those who are vaccinated, Bontá said.

“For those who volunteer for smallpox vaccination, safety must be our first concern,” Bontá said. “This delay will allow the smallpox vaccination program to resume in a manner that is safe and effective.”

The CDC has received reports of heart attacks and other heart conditions in seven individuals who had recently been vaccinated against smallpox. As a precautionary measure, the CDC has recommended that persons with known cardiac disease, such as cardiomyopathy, previous myocardial infarction, history of angina, or other evidence of coronary artery disease, not be vaccinated at this time. In addition, U.S. Public Health Service’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices today recommended that individuals with three or more known cardiac risk factors should not be vaccinated at this time.

“Although it is not known what role, if any, smallpox vaccination may have played in the reported cardiac illness among some individuals, it is prudent that the voluntary vaccination program be temporarily delayed while federal health authorities develop new screening guidelines,” Bontá said.

Next week the CDC is expected to provide additional recommendations for those who are volunteering for vaccination, as well as updated vaccination information and screening forms.

As of March 18, a total of 989 Californians had been vaccinated against smallpox, including 182 in Los Angeles County, which has a separate vaccination program.

For more information about smallpox in English and Spanish, please visit <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/smallpox>, or call the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services Safety Information and Referral Line toll-free (800) 550-5234, or TDD for the hearing impaired (800) 550-5281.